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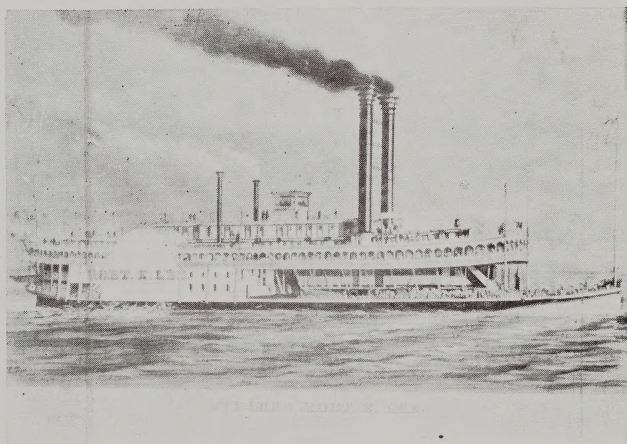
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A Brief History
of
New Albany and Floyd County
Indiana



Floyd County Historical Society

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A BRIEF HISTORY

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of

NEW ALBANY

and

FLOYD COUNTY, INDIANA



BY

ELSA STRASSWEG



FLOYD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEW ALBANY, INDIANA

1951

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this pamphlet is to present a brief discussion of the historical background of New Albany and Floyd County, Indiana. It has been written for school children, particularly for those of Junior High School, so that they may become aware of the forces which aided in the development of the community.

In order to keep the pamphlet brief, much interesting and important material concerning the cultural history necessarily has been omitted. This is also true of many interesting events and personalities.

A partial bibliography of the material consulted in the writing of this pamphlet is included. Anyone whose interest in local history is aroused by this brief sketch will be richly rewarded by further study of this material.

Elsa Strassweg, Corresponding Secretary
Floyd County Historical Society

New Albany, Indiana
June 26, 1951



Scribner House
Oldest Building in
New Albany

A Brief History Of New Albany And Floyd County, Indiana

Floyd County, the second smallest county in area in the state of Indiana was cut from Clark and Harrison counties in the year 1819. It contains 92,800 acres, approximately 145 square miles. The 1950 census shows a population of 43,905.

When the first permanent settlers moved into what is now Floyd County, the state of Indiana had not yet been organized. Robert La Follette and his young wife crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky in November 1804, cleared land in what is now Franklin Township, and built the first log cabin within the present boundaries of the county. Probably the next permanent settlers in this locale were Clement Nance and Patrick Shields and their families, who also crossed the Silver Hills and settled not many miles from the La Follette cabin.

As early as 1809 James Mitchell established a ferry at what is now the foot of East Fifth Street. A Mr. Trueblood erected a log grist mill on Falling Run Creek soon after Mitchell settled. Elihu Marsh built a log cabin near the grist mill. A Mrs. Roberts kept travelers overnight in her log cabin; these travelers were, for the most part, post riders who carried the mail from Louisville to Vincennes, which was then the capital of the Indiana Territory. Other settlers moved into the area, both squatters and people who took up land, but no attempt was made to establish a village or town until 1812.

In 1812, Joel, Abner, and Nathaniel Scribner, three brothers who had come from New York state, bought 826 acres of land for \$8,000.00 from Colonel John Paul of Madison, Indiana. These 826 acres of land became the site for the town of New Albany. On March 2, 1813 the Scribner brothers began cutting timber for a double log cabin, and in the summer of 1813 the town of New Albany was platted and the first lots were sold in November of that year. Since the Scribners had come from New York state they named their town in honor of Albany, the capital of that state. They were interested in attracting families of substance and worth to their community and advertised in the eastern newspapers the sale of lots in New Albany. On Thursday, August 19, 1813 the following advertisement appeared in *The Aurora*, a newspaper published in Philadelphia.

New Albany

The town, just laid out with spacious streets, public square, market &c is situated on the banks of the Ohio river at the crossing place from Louisville to Vincennes, about two miles below the Falls, in the Indiana Territory, affords a beautiful and commodious harbor. The beauty of the prospect is not surpassed by any other Western country. —The bank adjoining the river is high and not subject to inundations. At the distance of 650 feet back is a second rise of about 20 feet. from which there is an extensive view up and down the river. —There is a sufficient number of excellent and never failing springs for the supplying of any number of inhabitants. This advantage, together with that of the country around being dry and clear of any stagnant water—being sufficiently distant below the Falls to avoid the fogs, and any noxious exhalation arising therefrom in warm season; and the wind generally blowing up at that time, are sufficient reasons to induce a belief of the healthfulness of the situation. The advantages New Albany has in point of trade, are perhaps unrivalled by any on the Ohio, as it is immediately below all the dangers which boats and ships are subject to in passing over the Falls, and is the only eligible situation for a depot for all the exports and imports of a great part of the Territory, and may export and import while the river is low and the markets good, as well as when the water is high. —From the vast quantity of excellent ship timber, the great abundance of iron ore, within a few miles and the facility with which hemp is raised, it is presumed that this will be one of the best ports in the United States for the building of vessels, as well as the loading them. The erection of a saw mill to go by steam is contemplated this fall, and a grist and flour mill next summer.

Lots will be sold at auction on the first Tuesday and Wednesday in November next. The terms of payment will be one fourth ready money and the remainder at three annual instalments, to be secured by deed of trust, or otherwise. —One fourth part of each payment to be paid into the hands of trustees, (to be chosen by the purchasers) until such payments shall amount to five thousand dollars; the interest of which, to be applied to the use of schools, in the town, for the use of its inhabitants forever.

Manufactures of iron, cotton, hemp, wool, &c is much wanted, as is all kinds of mechanism.

THE PROPRIETORS

New Albany, July 8th, 1813.

New Albany attracted many new settlers and grew rapidly. By 1816 when Indiana was admitted to the union as a state, New Albany was a flourishing village. The Scribners and other citizens were ambitious for their settlement and decided that New Albany should be made a county seat. Clark and Harrison were then the two counties in this area; the line which divided them followed the top of Silver Hills.* Since both of these counties had long established county seats, the only thing left for the citizens of New Albany to do was to organize a new county. During the winter of 1818-1819 some of the town's most influential citizens, such as the Scribners, Seth Woodruff, General Alex S. Burnett, Davis Floyd, Clement Nance, and others, went to Corydon where the general assembly was in session, and lobbied for the formation of a new county. In early 1819 Jonathan Jennings, then Governor of Indiana, appointed a board of commissioners to designate the boundry of the new county, which was to be known as Floyd County.

There have been two theories to account for the naming of Floyd County. One story has it that the name was in honor of Davis Floyd, who later became the first judge of the county and who earlier had been involved in the Burr Conspiracy. Since Davis Floyd was only one of many who lobbied for the new county, it does not seem feasible that he would have been singled out for this honor. The other story which has been handed down is that the county was named for Colonel John Floyd, a member of a well known Virginia family and an early pioneer in Kentucky. Colonel John Floyd was an outstanding Indiana fighter and lost his life in a battle with the Indians on the Kentucky bank of the Ohio River directly across from where New Albany is situated.

Having secured the formation of Floyd County the citizens of New Albany then set about to secure the county seat for their town. In 1819 Greenville was equal in size and popula-

*History of the Ohio Falls Cities and their counties.
Vol. 2, Page 85.

tion to New Albany, and also wanted the county seat. The New Albany citizens, however, promised more money and land to the county, and the commissioners decided in their favor. Among the promises made was that adequate county buildings would be erected; unfortunately this was not done immediately. In 1823 there was a reappointment of commissioners by the state to relocate the county seat of Floyd County. Fearing that they would lose the county seat to Greenville, the citizens of New Albany again raised money by public subscription; the Greenville citizens did the same. This time Greenville raised a little more money than New Albany, but Seth Woodruff stated that he would erect a cupola with a bell on the top of the court house at the cost of \$100.00. This apparently was too much for the commissioners to resist, and for a second time they decided in favor of New Albany. The first county court house was finished in November, 1824, except for the cupola and bell. As a matter of fact, Seth Woodruff did not fulfill his part of the agreement until 1827, and then only on the insistence of the commissioners. After the formation of the county early in 1819, Clement Nance, Jr., Charles Paxson, and Jacob Piersol were appointed on the first board of commissioners. James Besse was the first sheriff and treasurer; Isaac Stewart was assessor; Joel Scribner was named clerk and recorder; and Davis Floyd was appointed the first judge of Floyd County. One of the first acts of the commissioners was the establishment of three townships. On February 8, 1819, New Albany, Franklin, and Greenville townships were formed. For nine years these were the only townships in the county. On May 5, 1828 Lafayette Township was cut from Greenville Township. Georgetown Township was not formed until November 6, 1836.

Development Of The Townships

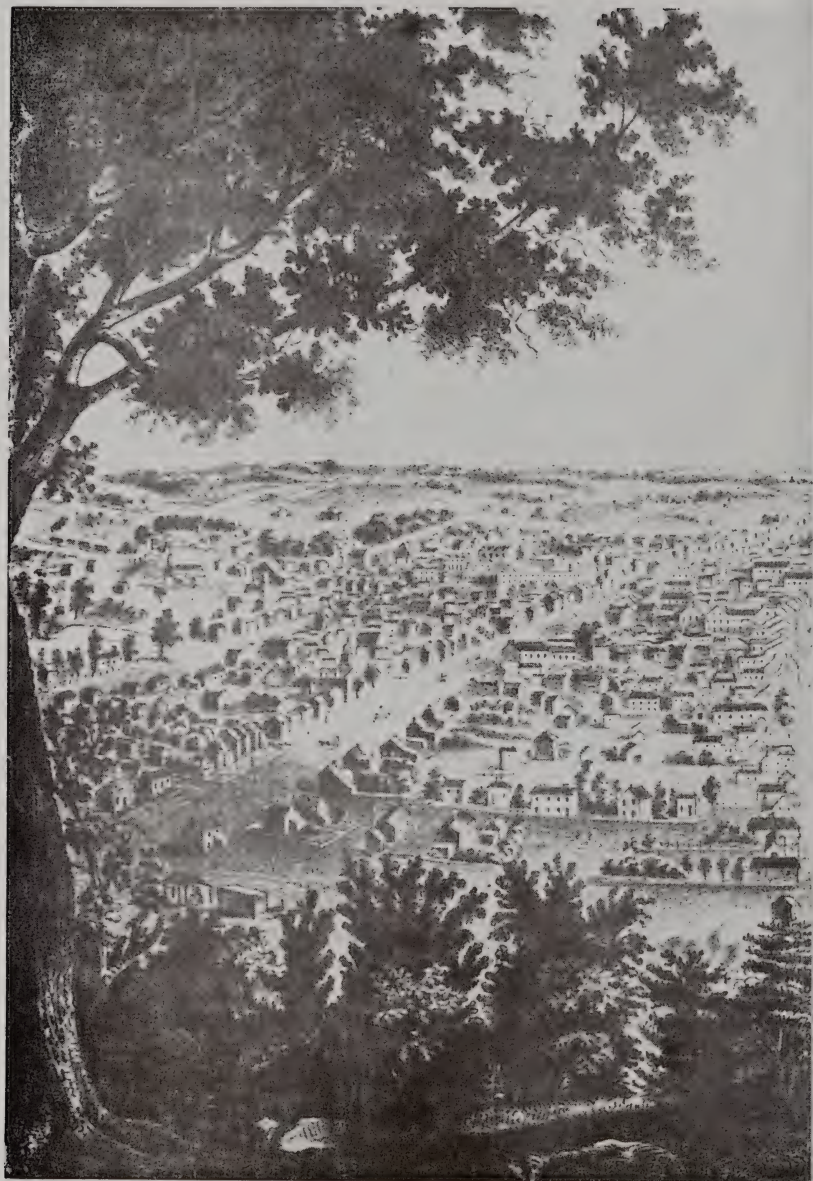
No other towns or villages of any size existed in New Albany township other than the city of NEW ALBANY. Several villages were started but were absorbed by the growth of the county seat. Epaphras Jones, an eccentric early settler, attempted to build up a town in opposition to New Albany. This town,

which was called Providence, was laid out on the 100 acre tract of land which Jones had been granted for his service in the Revolutionary War under the leadership of Colonel George Rogers Clark. In order to cut off New Albany, Ephraim Jones decided to build a road which would intersect the Vincennes Road north of the town of New Albany. This project did not develop but Vincennes street in present day New Albany follows the line of this old road. By 1839 the population of New Albany had reached 4,200, and on February 12, 1839 the incorporation of New Albany as a city was approved. The first city officers were: P. M. Dorsey, Mayor; Henry Collins, Recorder; John S. Davis, Clerk; Edward Brown, Treasurer; David Wilkinson, Collector and Marshall; Patrick Crowley, James Collins, Israel Crane, Edward Brown, Hezekiah Beeler, Samuel M. Bolin, Henry W. Smith, Randall Crawford, Absalom Cox, William Underhill, Preston F. Tuley, and E. W. Benton, Councilmen.

Franklin Township has always been a rural area. No towns or villages ever grew up in this division of the county. An early settler, James Tabler, surveyed and platted a town and even built a house to be used for elections and public meetings. Since Mr. Tabler was a staunch Democrat and an admirer of the president of that day, he called the purposed town BUCHANAN; unfortunately, however, it did not prosper.

In Greenville township, the town of GREENVILLE, which once rivalled New Albany, was laid out in May 1816. The two proprietors of the town were Andrew Mundell, a school teacher from Kentucky who settled in Indiana about 1806 or 1807, and Benjamin Haines who purchased a section of land adjoining Mundell's property about 1807. GALENA was settled about 1836, and laid out by George Sease on May 27, 1837. It was first called Germantown, and it was not until 1860 that its name was changed to Galena.

Lafayette Township has had several communities which sprouted and then disappeared. Three, however, have been permanent settlements. The largest is now known as FLOYD KNOBS from the name of the post office, but for years it was known as Mooresville. Mooresville was never platted but was



New Albany,



diana in 1850

probably settled about 1840. It received its name from Judge Moore, who bought several hundred acres of land in the area about 1810. SCOTTSVILLE, a village on the north boundry of the county, was settled about 1812 and was laid out on March 23, 1853. Moses and John Scott, from whom it received its name, were early settlers. The community surrounding the Catholic church, St. Mary's of the Knobs, has played an important part in the development of the township. As early as 1820 a log chapel had been built in this area, and visiting priests from Kentucky conducted services. In 1837 under the direction of Father Louis Neyron the first brick church was built. The present church was built in 1908 under the leadership of Father Joseph Sermersheim.

Georgetown Township has had two permanent settlements. One of these, GEORGETOWN by name, grew up around Patrick Shield's sawmill on Whiskey Run Road. It was settled about six years earlier than New Albany. In 1807 George Waltz, who had entered land here, gave two blacksmiths, Andrew Huff and Absalom Barnaby, plots of ground as an inducement to them to open blacksmith shops. These smithies naturally bought people to the settlement. Since Waltz was a public spirited man and influential in the community, the town soon became known as Georgetown. EDWARDSVILLE, the other village in Georgetown Township, was laid out in 1853 by Henry Edwards who owned the land which the village occupied.

Early Churches In New Albany And Floyd County

Accoring to available records, Rev. John Shrader organized the first established church in New Albany. A small group of people belonging to the Methodist Episcopal faith met first at the residence of a Mrs. Ruff in 1817, and on November 25 of that year this group under John Shrader dedicated the first church building in New Albany. From this beginning has developed the Wesley Chapel Methodist Church. The Centenary Methodist Church was formed about 1839, and many other Methodist churches have developed since that time. The first colored Methodist church was organized as early as 1840, in what was then known as West Union.

The Scribners, who were Presbyterians, were instrumental in the organization of a Presbyterian church as early as

February 16, 1816. This church, however, was in Jeffersonville, and it was not until December 7, 1817 that the New Albany members were reorganized by Rev. D. C. Banks of Louisville into the First Presbyterian Church of New Albany.

About 1825, Seth Woodruff organized the first Baptist church in the town, and served as the preacher part of the time. Because of a disagreement among the members of this congregation, 43 members withdrew on May 19, 1835 and organized the first Christian church, which became known as the Park Christian Church.

Other early protestant denominations were the Episcopal Church dating from July 18, 1834; the Evangelical and Reformed Church, known formerly as the German Evangelical Lutheran Church, organized on October 25, 1837.

The Holy Trinity Church was the first Catholic church to be organized in New Albany. Father Louis Neyron, who is said to have been a surgeon in Napoleon's army, organized this church in 1836. The following year he built the first brick church of St. Mary of the Knobs in Floyd County.

In Floyd County, outside of New Albany, the Methodists and Baptists were probably the first protestant denominations to establish churches. Many of the very early religious groups met at homes, and it has been said that Patrick Shield's house was always open for religious meetings regardless of denomination. Among the very early churches organized were Mt. Zion Church in Franklin Township, which grew out of a Methodist class which was organized about 1818 by David Gunn; and the Hopewell Baptist Church in this township which may have been established at an even earlier date. The Swartz meeting house for the Methodists was erected about 1820 in Georgetown Township. The Evangelical United Brethren Church of Georgetown was established in 1830, and a Disciple Church was established as early as 1825. In Greenville Township, St. John's Lutheran Church was erected in 1820; and Schrader's Chapel, Mt. Eden Church, and Robert's Chapel date from early in the nineteenth century. The Old Salem Church of Georgetown, which is now considered one of the earliest church buildings in the county, was not built until about 1843.

Industrial And Economic Development Of The Community

New Albany has had three distinct periods of industrial development. During the first period steamboat building was the main source of livelihood for the inhabitants, next came the glass manufacturing era under J. B. Ford and W. C. De-Pauw, and last, the period of the present, is the veneer industry and its ramifications.

Steamboat building began early in New Albany, for according to McMurtree's *Sketches of Louisville* published in 1819, two boats were built in New Albany prior to that date. These were the *Ohio* built by Joseph McClary for the Messrs Shreve and Blair and the *Volcano* built by Samuel Marsh for Robinson and De Hart. Both were built in the year 1818. From then on boats were built regularly until 1867. A list of the number of boats built, the tonnage, and the value show the gradual growth and rapid decline of the industry.

Boats Built In New Albany

	No.	Tonnage	Value
Prior to 1820	4	880	\$ 75,856
1820-1825	1	130	11,000
1825-1830	12	2,124	183,189
1830-1835	17	4,381	377,642
1835-1840	33	8,294	714,942
1840-1845	54	15,768	1,359,202
1845-1850	69	23,087	1,990,099
1850-1855	65	30,342	2,565,403
1855-1860	62	24,571	2,217,010
1860-1865	27	11,290	1,265,000
1865-1867	14	5,157	750,000*

*Industrial Development of New Albany. P. 34. Vol. 2, page 169-171.

In the year 1856 steamboat building in New Albany reached its peak, and 22 boats were built that year. Business continued to be good until the War Between the States. During the war years several government boats were built, but following the close of the war steamboat building went into a decline due principally to the expansion of the railroads. In 1866, however, as an attempt to instill new life into river traffic a "floating palace", which became one of the most famous steamboats on the western waters, was built at New Albany. This was the *Robert E. Lee* of racing fame. The Lee's race with the *Natchez* June 30-July 4, 1870 has been recorded in song and story until it has become part of the American tradition. Other outstanding boats were the *Eclipse*, the *A. L. Shotwell*, and the *Glendy Burke*, or the *Glen D. Burke* as it was originally named. The *Glendy Burke* is known principally today because of the Stephen Collins Foster song "The Glendy Burke."

The glass manufacturing began in 1867 when J. B. Ford built a glass works on the Ohio River banks at 13th Street. Mr. Ford had attempted to establish a glass works at E. 10th Street and the river as early as 1865, but this plant was not successful. In 1873 Mr. Ford's business failed again and he left New Albany. Washington C. DePauw, who had been an investor in the Ford works, took over the property as payment for his investment and developed a highly successful plant. This was first known as the Star Plateglass Company, and in 1881 the name was changed to the DePauw American Plate Glass Co. By 1890, which was the peak year in the glass industry in New Albany, the plant occupied more than 30 acres of land along the river front. Although interested primarily in the manufacturing of plate glass the DePauw American Plate Glass Co. also made window glass, fruit jars, and bottles. Because of the success of the glass industry, other industries, financed in part by capital from the glass works, were founded. There were a cotton and woolen mill, a hosiery mill, an iron works, foundries, and tanneries, all of which did a flourishing business. The decline of the glass making industry was very sudden. With the development of natural gas in northern Indiana, glass manufacturing could be done much cheaper in the northern part of the state. Lower

production costs made possible higher wages and this resulted in the exodus of many skilled workmen from New Albany. The local plant was crippled badly, and by the end of 1893 it had practically suspended operations.*

The first of the plywood and veneer plants in New Albany was the Indiana Veneer and Panel Company which began operation in 1901. The first plant, which was financed with outside capital, met with immediate success. Encouraged by this, local capital built and operated other plants of similar or allied character. Today New Albany is known as the hardwood plywood center of the nation, with eight veneer and plywood companies operating in New Albany and Floyd County and doing a volume of business of approximately \$40,000,000.00 annually.

The rural area of Floyd County is made up chiefly of small farms. Dairying and berry growing, particularly strawberries, are the principal industries. Floyd Knobs is the center of the strawberry shipping industry and two active growers' cooperative associations and two cash berry markets handle the bulk of the crop.

Early Schools Of New Albany And Floyd County

The first school house in New Albany was erected by the Scribners about 1817. It was a large square cabin and stood on the public square at the corner of State and Spring Streets. Stephen Beers taught in this school, and was probably the first school teacher in New Albany. The state legislature passed an act on January 8, 1821 entitled "An act incorporating the New Albany school," which established the first New Albany school system under a board of managers. The first school under this board was opened in the fall of 1823 with John Spaulding as the teacher. This school continued to operate with one teacher until 1838 when an assistant was employed. In 1849, with part of the accumulation of interest on the money donated by the Scribners, the Scribner School on the corner of lower First and Spring Streets was built. At the same time that this school was operating, district or common schools were being conducted in the city by two separate boards of trustees. There were, therefore, three separate school sys-

* Industrial Development of New Albany. p. 34.

tems in operation in New Albany at one time. In 1853 the city assumed control of the district schools and also of the Scribner school fund, and the organization of the present school city of New Albany came into being.

During the early days of New Albany's history there were many "select" schools which were established for varying periods of time. Among the most important were the Anderson Schools, the Ayers Theological Seminary and the Indiana Asbury Female College, which later became the DePauw College for Young Ladies.

New Albany was approved as the location of the Indiana Asbury Female College, which was sponsored by the Indiana Methodist Conference, at a meeting of the conference in September, 1849. The building was dedicated on February 27, 1852, and the school was operated with varying success until the War Between the States. The college was opened in 1866, and in 1867 the name was changed to Depauw College for Young Ladies in honor of W. C. DePauw who had helped the board of directors out of their financial difficulties. The school continued to operate under the Indiana Methodist Conference until September 1887, when the committee on education reported that the DePauw College at New Albany would not be opened on account of financial embarrassment. Following this DePauw College operated from 1889 to 1894 as a coeducational institution under James and Benoni May of Salem, Indiana; and for a while it was a boarding school for girls, but by 1900 DePauw College no longer existed.

The New Albany Theological Seminary, or Ayer's University as it was also called, was started about 1847 and was intended for the education of ministers of the Presbyterian church. It operated successfully here for several years, but about 1854 it was moved to Chicago. Part of the buildings which were erected for this school are still standing today, located on Elm Street at East Sixth Street.

In 1841 John B. Anderson and his wife moved to New Albany from Brandenburg, Kentucky and opened the two Anderson schools. One was the Anderson Collegiate Institute for Boys and the other was Anderson's Female Seminary. The schools were operated with considerable success for about

20 years. In 1858 John Anderson, because of ill health, closed his schools. Anderson later became connected with the Pennsylvania Railroad Co. After his promotion to district superintendent, he was transferred to his native state Pennsylvania where he opened his private library to young working boys. ~~One of his library's best patrons was a young boy named Andrew Carnegie.~~

The early schools of rural Floyd County were subscription schools, and there were several of them in each township operating for various periods. One of the most interesting schools in the rural area was the seminary at Greenville. Early in its statehood the Indiana general assembly passed a law permitting the building of a county seminary in each county in the state; the support for the school was to come from taxes. The location of the seminary was to be determined by the amount of money subscribed for the school buildings by the towns of the county. Greenville had lost the county seat to New Albany but did secure the county seminary. A lot of one acre was donated by Mr. Isaac Redman, and a two story brick building was erected at the cost of \$2,800. In 1852 when the grade-school system came into being, the general assembly authorized the sale of all county seminaries, and the school at Greenville after being sold at public auction became a common school for the lower grades.

Local Citizens Of National Prominence.

New Albany and Floyd County have produced many worth while and outstanding citizens; and since the inhabitants of an area are responsible for the development of a community, it seems fitting that a few of them who have attained national prominence should be mentioned briefly.

This community has contributed three outstanding figures to government. ASHBEL P. WILLARD, the eleventh governor of Indiana, was a resident of New Albany from 1845 until his death in 1860. Willard was one of the youngest men to be elected Governor of Indiana, and is considered to be one of the most brilliant men to have held that office.

MICHAEL C. KERR was Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1875. He served five terms in Congress from the

old third congressional district of Indiana. He was a resident of New Albany from 1852 until his death in 1876.

JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT SHERMAN MINTON was born in Georgetown on October 21, 1890. He is the first Hoosier to attain the honor of a seat on the Supreme Court. Like Willard and Kerr, Justice Minton was educated in law; unlike them, however, he attended Floyd County and New Albany schools and is truly a native son.

In the field of writing, New Albany and Floyd County can be very proud of the fact that they have contributed to the development of several important figures in literature, history and sociology. FORCEY THE WILLSON, who moved to New Albany with his parents at the age of 15, lived here until three years before his death in 1867. Willson was one of the important minor poets of the nineteenth century, and one of his poems, "The Old Sergeant," achieved nation-wide fame during the War Between the States.

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY, was born in Spencer, Indiana in 1869 and moved with his family to New Albany at the age of four. He graduated from the New Albany High School as valedictorian of his class in 1875, and taught in one of the county schools for a year. His contribution to American poetry and drama have been noteworthy. His two plays "*The Great Divide*" and "*The Faith Healer*" are perhaps better known than any of his work, although his lyric poetry continues to be read and admired, and his "*History of English Literature*" written with Robert M. Lovett is still used as a college text.

ROBERT S. LYND, another native son, should also be mentioned. His writing in the field of sociology, particularly "*Middletown*" and "*Middletown in Transition*" have been outstanding.

PROFESSOR R. CARLYLE BULEY, the first Hoosier to win a Pulitzer Award in the field of history, was born in Georgetown. His two volume history "*The Old Northwest*" won the Pulitzer Award in 1951.

In the theater J. WARREN KERRIGAN and his sister KATHLEEN KERRIGAN were well known in the first quarter of the twentieth century. J. Warren Kerrigan was not only a mat-

inee idol of the theater, but later became a star in the silent movies. Both of the Kerrigans were born and reared in New Albany. A featured headliner on the Keith and Orpheum circuits during the heyday of vaudeville was CHARLES E. (BERT) KENNY, who was also born and reared here.

Baseball has recruited four outstanding players from this area. JOUETT MEEKIN, BILLY HERMAN, MAX MACON, and EDDIE MOORE were all big league players.

In the field of vocational education, one of the pioneers and important contributors was CHARLES PROSSER, a graduate of the New Albany High Schools. Charles Prosser also taught in the New Albany school system, and served as the Superintendent of Schools for a time. In the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church one New Albany native son has risen steadily. He is THE MOST REVEREND JOSEPH ELMER RITTER, Archbishop of the St. Louis Diocese. JOSEPH W. CLOKEY, who has contributed much to the choral music of America, was born in New Albany in 1890 and spent much of his youth here. In the field of military science, MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD M. LEWIS, who was born and reared in New Albany, was the first American general to break the Hindenburg line in the first world war.

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Floyd County Court House 1951

by Walter Kiser

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